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Testimony in Support of HB 5387 Transportation and Commerce Committee March 2, 2010

Chairmen DeFronzo and Guerrera, Ranking Members Boucher and Scribner, and members of the Transportation Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to write in support of **HB 5387: AN ACT CONCERNING THE REMOVAL OF SNOW AND ICE FROM MOTOR VEHICLES.**

The safety of drivers should never be in jeopardy by the mere fact that other motorists have failed to properly remove accumulated snow and ice from atop their vehicles and off windows. Yet, it is a common occurrence for loose snow and ice falling off moving vehicles to cause havoc on other motorists.

I believe that properly clearing vehicles of ice and snow is not just a matter of courtesy, but *common sense*, often times ignored by drivers who won't take the necessary precautions to ensure their own safety and those they share the road with. Under HB 5387, all negligent motorists would be penalized for failing to remove ice or snow from their vehicle, but only after an accident has occurred. I strongly suggest the language be amended to allow police to be more proactive in preventing accidents from happening in the first place. Similar to New Jersey's law, fines should be issued to all motorists, including commercial motorists, observed driving snow and ice covered vehicles, possibly averting more serious, perhaps tragic, accidents.

It's important that commercial vehicles be included in this effort. Large trucks with flat trailers are by physical design the most susceptible to ice and snow falling off. There are few things in life scarier than a large jagged piece of ice flying towards your windshield at 60 mph. Techniques and devices to clear trucks vary, both in effectiveness and cost. I would

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encourage the committee to work with our trucking industry to see if there is a long-term, cost-effective way to clean off trucks and keep our roads safe. From the research I've done, it seems trucking companies have a variety of options to choose from such as heated trailer roof top panels, to elaborate snow throwers. .

As the Committee may be aware, Connecticut's neighbors have seen fit to propose and adopt language protecting motorists from snow or ice falling off motor vehicles.

New Jersey recently passed legislation to allow police to fine persons up to \$75 for failure to clear dangerous accumulations of ice and snow off vehicles. The state also has enhanced fines of up to \$1000 for passenger vehicle operators and up to \$1500 for commercial motor vehicle operators who cause damage to persons or property by snow and ice becoming dislodged from a moving vehicle.

In **New Hampshire**, the law provides penalties for reckless or negligent operation of a motor vehicle when damage or an accident is caused by the failure to remove snow and ice.

In **New York**, legislation has been introduced to require motorists to clear snow and ice from the roof, windshield and cargo beds of vehicles. Failure to remove accumulated snow and ice could result in a fine of up to \$850 for non-commercial vehicles and up to \$1250 for commercial motor vehicles.

In **Pennsylvania**, if snow and ice is dislodged from a moving vehicle and strikes another vehicle or pedestrian and causes death or serious bodily injury the operator of the vehicle from which the snow or ice is dislodged is subject to a fine up to \$1000.

Other states include Georgia, Michigan, and Nebraska and most recently the District of Columbia passed a city ordinance to remove snow and ice from vehicles.

There have been several bills since 1991 introduced that require a motor vehicle operator to remove accumulated ice or snow from their vehicle prior to operating it on highways and roads in Connecticut. It's finally time to sign this into law.

I strongly urge the Transportation Committee to pass this common sense initiative.